

MEMORANDUM TO: GENERAL SMITH

We can find no record of earlier communication referred to in the attached.

IEB

[Redacted]

Attached letter has been acknowledged.

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27. Dec

24 December 1951
(DATE)

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(47)

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Gen. Walter B. Smith
Central Intelligence Agency
2430 E. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear General:

I have been meaning to write for several months to give you the rest of the story on [redacted] You will recall that I wrote earlier this year from Germany. I have since given up my position with [redacted] and have returned to the States. You will also recall that that I told you how [redacted] steadfastly refused to give me an interview or to tell me what really happened at Rheims to give him such a deep seated admiration for you. He merely asked me to send you a message of his good will, which I did. He said you would understand.

In spite of his refusal to give me a story [redacted] and I became very good friends. I visited in his home a number of times and I think we had a lot in common. I am still corresponding with him. Before I left Germany I went by to see him for a last visit and to tell him goodbye. It was on this occasion that he finally showed me a sheaf of notes he had made of his experiences and impressions at Rheims and told me the whole story of what happened. This included, of course, the basis for his admiration for you. This was all, of course, with the unspoken understanding that I would never publish the story without his permission.

Altho it is somewhat like carrying coals to Newcastle to repeat the story to you, I do so briefly here merely because what impressed him so greatly may not have been the outstanding problem dealt with at Rheims. It was simply that the German delegation requested a 48 hour delay in the effective date of the unconditional surrender to enable them to move several hundred thousand troops away from -- and out of the hands off -- the oncoming Russians. They felt that this would simply be saving the lives of thousands upon thousands of those men.

He says that it seemed you were sympathetic to this proposal and took it up with Eisenhower who flatly turned it down. It seems there must have been some considerable discussion of this point, at least informally, and that Eisenhower's view prevailed. [redacted] has not forgotten this. Probably no German would ever forget it if they knew about it, especially now that post-war history has proven the Germans were right. As you well know there is a vast discrepancy between the number of Germans taken into Russia and those repatriated. And, as is as equally well known, Russia has officially completed the repatriation.

The significant point about this whole matter is [redacted] attitude toward it now, as the only living German who knows it. Despite the fact that he will probably never forgive Eisenhower he will not talk. I doubt if he has told this story to even a half a dozen of his closest friends. It is entirely possible that I am the only person he ever told it to. When I pressed him for his reasons it revealed even more clearly the admirable traits of character this remarkable young German possesses. Perhaps you will disagree with me.

His decision to remain quiet is based simply on the fact that altho Eisenhower is not too well loved in Germany he feels that Germany's whole future rests on the success of the North Atlantic defense army, and of our efforts to bring about a greater degree of cooperation between European nations, including Germany.

Eisenhower was never too well liked in Germany, for obvious reasons. When he was appointed NATO commander the Germans received it coolly. They would have preferred someone like Lucius Clay. Slowly they warmed up to Ike a bit. You know Eisenhower well enough to know that he has a way of winning over people, even when they don't especially want to be won over. [] feels simply that if the Rheims story were publicly known in Germany the Germans would never forgive Ike. There are simply too many German mothers and wives still looking towards the East for their sons and husbands. He feels it would seriously damage Ike's chances of ever winning German cooperation. Even if Eisenhower were to pass out of the NATO picture the story would still carry loads of resentment back into the hearts of Germans, he feels.

[] may be overemphasizing a thing like this -- in his own mind. I wouldn't know for sure. I do believe it would carry considerable weight. Maybe as much as he thinks. I spent about five years in Germany myself and speak fluent German. I probably got to know them better than most Americans who spent time there. He could very well be right.

"I haven't forgiven Eisenhower," [] told me. "I probably never will. But Germany needs Eisenhower now and I agree that Eisenhower is probably the logical man to command the Atlantic Defense army because he is so highly respected by the other European Allies. Europe needs Eisenhower. So long as he is needed I will never do anything that will hurt his reputation with my people."

Aside from all this [] is a good European and a democrat. When I say democrat I am not speaking in the dogmatic sense of the word. He was one of the few Germans I ever met who really understood what democracy meant. Lots of them paid lip service after the Americans came in.

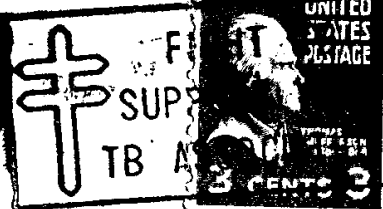
I would not wish to suggest anything which does not occur to you spontaneously, General, but I certainly believe you will not be wasting your time if you look this young man up if you should happen to visit Germany in the near future, or any time. You have no idea how much he would appreciate a hand shake from you now, years after Rheims, and a word of encouragement from a man whom he deeply admires.

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